



Borough of Merchantville
New Jersey

FRANK M. NORTH
MAYOR
(856) 662-2474 x119

Merchantville – Cherry Hill Merger
August 18, 2010 Status

Dear Residents,

As I am sure you are aware, there has been a discussion concerning a possible merger between the two towns of Merchantville and Cherry Hill Township. I think it appropriate to address the residents of Merchantville to provide insight on what actions have taken place up to this point.

June 14, 2010:

During the public portion of the regular council meeting, a group of Merchantville residents presented a petition with 476 signatures. The petition requested that Merchantville “evaluate and work toward a real consolidation plan with Cherry Hill, NJ” and “to take the steps necessary to begin a merger with Cherry Hill, NJ to save our community”.

The subject was debated among council members and it was decided to authorize Mayor North to reach out to Cherry Hill through the proper channels and gauge interest of Cherry Hill’s governing body as it related to this matter.

June 22, 2010:

In an effort to commence open discussion between our two communities, a meeting was held at the office of Senator James Beach. Those in attendance were; Senator James Beach, Chief of Staff Ivy Rovner, Cherry Hill Township Mayor Bernie Platt, Chief of Staff Dan Keashen, Sherri Schweitzer Esquire, Merchantville Mayor Frank M. North, Councilman Anthony Perno, Timothy J. Higgins, Esquire.

It was agreed that Senator Beach would reach out to the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) and Department of Education (DOE) to arrange a meeting between community leaders. The goal of the meeting would be to set up a study to determine the cost and feasibility of a joint consolidation of communities.

August 02, 2010:

A follow up meeting was arranged by Senator Beach's office to take place with DCA Commissioner Lori Grifa, and DOE Commissioner Bret Shundler, Mayor Platt and Mayor North and several selected representatives from each community. Due to a conflict, the meeting was cancelled by Cherry Hill. The meeting was rescheduled for August 16th.

August 09, 2010:

The local Merchantville petitioning group presented a refined petition to the Merchantville Borough Clerk ensuring that the document would be more viable from a legal perspective. Introduction of the revised petition was provided by the borough clerk that evening at the regularly scheduled council meeting.

At the Borough Council meeting, Mayor North updated the residents regarding the status of communication between Cherry Hill and Merchantville and the anticipated meeting in Trenton.

August 10, 2010:

Mayor North found out that Cherry Hill's Council had voted on and approved a resolution to enter into a joint merger study with Merchantville at its August 9, 2010 council meeting.

August 11, 2010:

Denise Brouse, Borough Clerk and Borough Solicitor, Timothy J. Higgins, met with representatives from Camden County of Board of Elections for the purpose of satisfying the clerk's statutory obligation of determining the sufficiency of the petition.

It was determined that the petition had been signed by registered voters, in a number sufficient to equal 10% of the total votes cast at the last preceding general election, the petition was forwarded to the Department of Community Affairs.

August 12, 2010:

Mayor North contacted Mayor Platt at his place of business to discuss several issues claimed by some Merchantville residents. At that time Mayor Platt confirmed he would not be able to attend the meeting scheduled for August 16 in Trenton with the DCA and DOE Commissioners.

August 16, 2010:

This meeting with Commissioners Grifa and Shundler was cancelled due to scheduling conflicts.

I would like to address the following:

Rumor 1: Mayor North Does Not Return Phone Calls To Cherry Hill:

I have in the past and will continue to return phone calls to Cherry Hill.

In an effort to confront this accusation, I have made several phone calls to Mayor Platt's place of business and township office. Our conversation was frank and to the point. I requested to know when Mayor Platt may have attempted to contact me without a returned call. The mayor indicated that his office had informed him of my lack of response, but could not substantiate this statement.

Concern about this issue was expressed by both of us and it was stated that the governing bodies will and must maintain an open and honest dialog in the future.

Prior to the June 22 meeting, Mayor Platt's office did call my place of business and we finally were able to talk later that day. We spoke about issues pertaining to a possible merger study and confirmation to attend the meeting was made by both of us.

With the exception phone calls having to do with the unresolved issues regarding the PARIS/SHARE and NPP Merchantville/Cherry Hill Grants, I am unaware of any attempts to reach me by Mayor Platt and/or his staff.

I am sure that Cherry Hill phone records during the time period being claimed will put this matter to rest.

Rumor 2: Mayor and Merchantville Council Members have had private meetings in an effort to sabotage the possible merger study;
Neither this mayor and/or members of Merchantville's council, to the best of my knowledge have had meetings in an attempt to sabotage the study and/or possible community merger.

Those claiming to have knowledge of said meetings, which would be in violation of the Sunshine Law, are obligated to contact the DCA and Camden County Prosecutors Office with proof of such meetings.

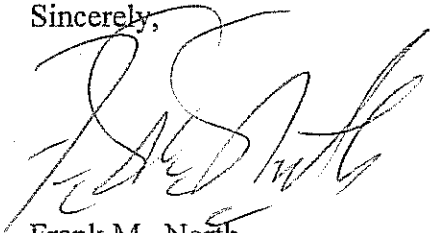
In closing, I am fairly certain that a majority, if not all members of both Merchantville and Cherry Hill Councils, believe a study to be a potentially good thing. It would provide a clear and honest look at the realities of the financial standing of both communities and the expected commitment that each community needs to make to remain independent or consolidate.

Residents wishing to share their comments on the possible merger with Cherry Hill, or any other topic, is welcome to attend one of our Borough Council meetings or contact me directly at Mayor@MerchantvilleNJ.gov or 856-662-2474 ext. 119

I am also available at Borough Hall most Sundays between the hours of 9:30 a.m. thru 12:30 p.m.

Additional information, as it becomes available on this issue, will be available on the Borough's website at www.merchantvillenj.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Frank M. North", written over a horizontal line.

Frank M. North
Mayor

Cc: Mayor Bernie Platt, Cherry Hill Township
Commissioner Lori Grifa DCA
Commissioner Bret Shundler DOE
John Rasimowicz, Division of Local Government
Senator James Beach
Merchantville Council Members